

CHILD RESTING / FEEDING CUSHION

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a continuation-in-part of Application
No. 10/274,665, filed October 19, 2002, entitled "CHILD
5 RESTING CUSHION.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention

This invention relates to a cushion for supporting an
infant or child during nursing at a mother's breast, feeding
10 from a bottle, resting in a person's lap, or resting in the
child's seat of a shopping cart or other transportation
device having a similar structure.

Brief Description of the Prior Art

Heretofore, very few, if any cushioning devices have
15 been designed for use as both a nursing cushion and shopping
cart cushion. Of those intended as nursing cushions, these
are almost universally basically flat cushions that function
on the basis of mother supporting her nursing infant, with
the cushion supporting mother's arm. They are not intended
20 to have the child rest directly on the cushion, or totally
remove the load of the nursing infant from mother's arm. Of
those cushions designed for use in a shopping cart, almost
all of the prior art devices have been designed to increase
comfort between the child's backside and the cart itself.
25 Some additional prior art has addressed shielding the child
from bacteria that might be accessed from the shopping cart
push bar. Little attention has been given to cushioning or
supporting a child from the front of the child, such as when
a child inadvertently is lunged forward toward the shopping
30 cart push bar, or when the child leans forward to a sleeping
position.

As noted, many variations in seat cushions have been developed to function between the backside of the child and the shopping cart. Such cushions have been constructed employing various fabrication techniques and materials,
5 including padded fabric, spongy material, or inflatable bladders.

Weber, U.S. Patent Number 5,029,351, issued July 9, 1991, and Weber, U.S. Patent Number 5,133,098, both disclose generally horseshoe and "I" beam shaped wedged cushions,
10 made from a relatively fixed shaped, resilient material. The surfaces of such devices are generally planar. Weber makes no attempt at providing additional support to raise the infant's head higher than the shoulders, while the infant nurses on its side. While Weber's device is adjustable by
15 sliding a wedge from side to side, only one side can be elevated at any one time. This makes it very difficult to be used with twins. Additionally, like common competitive products, Weber's device can only be used with the infant lying on its side, by having mother support the baby, and
20 the cushion supporting mother's arm. While the cushion may provide a significant amount of support in this mode, it does not totally eliminate the load on mother's upper torso. Weber also makes no attempt to address use in a shopping cart.

25 Pender, U.S. Patent Number 5,154,649, issued October 13, 1992, disclosed a generally "U" shaped, vertically adjustable, inflatable nursing cushion. In Pender, the nursing cushion is divided into separate chambers, stacked vertically. Each chamber can be independently inflated. This
30 allows the top chamber to be filled relatively firmly to provide additional support, while leaving one or more sub-

chambers less inflated, adjusting for total height. In Pender, the entire top chamber is at one inflation pressure providing relatively equal support over the entire top surface. No provisions are shown or indicated to raise the head of the infant higher than the shoulders. Pender does illustrate a nursing infant lying flat on its back and being supported by its mother's arm. This position is less than the ideal nursing position, and also does not remove 100% of the infant load from mother's upper torso. Pender also suggests using a common air mattress valve system which would require the user to remove the cushion to adjust the amount of lift or support. Pender also makes no attempt to address use in a shopping cart.

Patent 5,261,134 to Matthews, issued November 16, 1993, discloses a generally "C", or horseshoe, shaped cushion with generally round, or curved, inner and outer edges and generally lesser curved support surfaces. In this patent, the unusual shape is commonly copied or emulated by many manufacturers with various minor modifications. The cushions of this shape are generally designed to aid in nursing or feeding an infant or child. However, this type of cushion has several drawbacks as a nursing cushion. The lesser curved surface is relatively the same elevation across the entire surface, thus not elevating the child's head higher than the shoulders for nursing a child laying in the preferred position on their side. Additionally, there is no structure to provide for adjusting the height of the support for different size mothers and infants. When Matthews' cushion is used to nurse an infant on its side, mother's hand and arm must be used to support and guide the head, while the cushion supports mother's arm and hand. Even with the support of the cushion, a portion of the infant's weight

is still on mother's arm, neck, and back. Second, the curved or crescent shape requires that the child remain curved very close to the mother. Very little extra surface area for random movement or positioning is provided. Matthews also
5 makes no explicit attempt to address use in a shopping cart.

Attempts have been made to use this type of cushion as a shopping cart cushion. There are several drawbacks to using this type of device as a shopping cart cushion, some of these being actually dangerous to the child. First, there
10 is no securing device to hold the cushion in front of the child while in a shopping cart. The child can simply jettison the cushion off the front of the cart leaving the child totally exposed to hitting or teething on the super structure of the shopping cart. Second, the surfaces of
15 these types of cushions are relatively flat. If the child were to rest or fall asleep on this type of cushion in a shopping cart, the child could easily roll off either side and be harmed by hitting the superstructure of the shopping cart.

20 Additionally, as a nursing cushion, the relatively even or continuous surface does not provide any elevated support for the child's head above the surface of the cushion. There is also nothing to provide a foot stop for a nursing child. Further, the resting surface of the cushion is rounded at
25 its outer edge. As the infant or child becomes larger, he or she is forced to curl into a curved shape to avoid falling off the edge of the cushion. Additionally, this device, along with the many others that resemble it, does not deal with the issues of protecting a child in a shopping cart.

30 Zenoff, U.S. Patent Number 5,581,833, issued December 10, 1996, discloses a very popular cushion used as a nursing

cushion commercially known as "My Brest Friend". Like many of the popular cushions of this type, the cushion is made from a cut piece of resilient foam with a cloth covering. In typical use as a nursing cushion, this cushion has a flat upper surface, making it necessary for mother to support the infant with her arm, and the cushion then is used to support mother's arm, in order to nurse an infant on its side. Zenoff makes no provisions for varying the height or level of support provided to mother's arm. Further, Zenoff does not remove 100% of the load from mother's arm. Zenoff also makes no attempt to address use in a shopping cart.

Huntley, U.S. Patent Number 5,642,543, issued July 1, 1997, discloses an adjustable cushion that can be used for a variety of applications, including nursing an infant. In Huntley, spacers are removed or added between a top and bottom layer to adjust the amount of support. The surface of Huntley remains basically flat with areas of greater or lesser support. While Huntley is adjustable to some extent, it requires the user to open or remove any type of cover (if a cover is used). Huntley does not indicate that an infant can be nursed on its side, with or without the support of mother's arm. Further, adding or removing the inserts with an infant on mother's lap would be fairly cumbersome. Huntley also makes no attempt to address use in a shopping cart.

Simon, U.S. Patent Number 5,664,828, issued September 9, 1997, discloses a large nursing cushion that firmly mounts to the hand rails of a chair being used for nursing one or more infants. The nursing cushion in Simon is made with a very firm base offering a padded, but relatively flat upper surface. Like many of the other common nursing

cushions, Simon does not provide any support to elevate an infant's head higher than the shoulders for nursing on its side. Simon also does not address the issue of dealing with a chair that does not have hand rails, nor does Simon make
5 any attempt to address use in a shopping cart.

Clark, U.S. Patent Number 5,790,999, issued August 11, 1998, discloses a generally "U" shaped nursing cushion, made of a generally resilient foam core, with the top surface slanted inward towards mother. Clark professes that two
10 infants can be simultaneously nursed on their sides. However, Clark makes no provisions for supporting the infant's head higher than the shoulders. Further, Clark does not indicate how the nursing cushion is supported on either side of mother. Clark also does not offer any method of
15 adjusting the overall height of the nursing cushion to fit different size mothers and infants. Clark also makes no attempt to address use in a shopping cart.

Kassai et al. (Kassai), U.S. Patent Number 6,485,101 B2, issued November 26, 2002, discloses a child car seat
20 with adjustable head rests. Kassai provides a mechanism for adjusting the relative height of the head rest to fit different height children. Kassai makes no effort to deal with nursing an infant, or adjusting the amount of support provided by the padding when it is in the correct location.
25 Kassai also makes no attempt to address use in a shopping cart.

In the shopping cart cushion by "Baby a la cart" as presented at www.babyalacart.com, a typical prior art device is depicted. In "Baby a la cart", a relatively thin cotton
30 padded fabric is shaped into a general basket shape that fits into the seating portion of a typical shopping cart

forming a pad that is placed under, behind, and in front of the child. A portion of the padding is brought forward over the cart push bar to provide chest padding. An elastic strap is relied upon to secure the device to the shopping cart. A
5 restraint strap is relied upon to hold the child from lateral movement, in place of the standard strap provided with the shopping cart. This feature transfers liability for restraining the child away from the shopping cart and to the "Baby a la cart" device. While padding is provided around
10 the child, the use of "1 inch fluffy batting" is hardly sufficient to protect a child's forward or sideways movement that may result in even relatively low force impact with the hard bars of the shopping cart. Further, as with previously mentioned prior art, the pad of "Baby a la cart" is placed
15 generally under the child prior to the child being placed into the shopping cart. This means that the attendant must use their hands to insert the "Baby a la cart" device while the young child is left relatively unattended, or hold the baby with one arm, while using the other hand to put the
20 device in the shopping cart. This second requirement tends to be dangerous for the child. In addition to these stated drawbacks of "Baby a la cart", this device is totally impractical to serve as a nursing/feeding cushion.

Oliveira discloses a novel design for padding the head
25 of a child in a motor vehicle with greater padding on the sides, and straps that attach to the seatbelt. Oliveira makes no attempt to deal with use in a shopping cart or for nursing a child in the lap of a person.

It should be noted that all of the aforementioned prior
30 art shopping cart cushions, or car seat cushion devices, cushion the child from underneath or behind the child,

except for Matthews which does not address this issue at all. None of these prior art devices seeks to cushion a child already seated on the normal seating surface of a shopping cart. Further, none of the known prior art seeks to
5 cushion the child in a forward lying down position, or in a position in which the child is leaning forward with chest and face down in a sleeping position against the push bar of a shopping cart. Typically, the known prior art devices
10 require the user to install the devices into the shopping cart prior to placement of the child into the shopping cart seat. This forces attention to, and supervision of, the child to be diverted from the child to the device during installation in a shopping cart. When used as a nursing
15 cushion, none of the prior art shopping cart devices address this issue at all, and Matthews, along with the many similar devices, does not provide full support for the nursing child's head and feet, and provides only a relatively small surface support area for the child.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

20 The present invention overcomes the deficiencies of the prior art by providing a cushion configured to fit in the lap of a person feeding a child or infant in a reclined position, such as a nursing mother feeding an infant, comprising: a central section having an upper surface, a
25 lower surface, a front, a rear, and left and right sides, forming a generally level cushioning area; and left and right hingedly attached end cushion sections, movably affixed, respectively, to the central section left and right sides.

30 In a preferred embodiment, the present invention provides a cushion configured to provide a resting surface

for a child, a support structure that supports the body of a nursing child on the legs or thighs of a seated nursing mother, with adjustable end sections capable of being adjusted to raise the nursing child's head higher than the shoulders and up to the breast of the nursing mother.

The improved cushion comprises a uniquely configured and constructed multi-sectional cushion arrangement. A central cushion section has a cover enclosing a filler, an upper surface, a lower surface, left and right sides, an unrestricted front side free from obstructions, and an unrestricted rear side free from obstructions, the central cushion section forming a generally level cushioning area.

Left and right elevated cushion sections are adjustably attached to the central section, each left and right section having a cover enclosing a filler, an upper surface, a lower surface, and left and right sides. The right side of the left elevated cushion section is attached to the left side of the central cushion section, and the left side of the right elevated cushion section is attached to the right side of the central cushion section, thereby forming a plurality of side-by-side joined cushion sections with the left and right elevated cushion section upper surfaces lying in a common plane above and parallel to the plane of the central cushion section upper surface.

The device of the present invention provides a cushion that can be used in two ideal embodiment modes, a shopping cart cushion mode and a nursing cushion mode. In the shopping cart mode, it is placed into a shopping cart after the child is first placed and secured within the cart, using standard securing devices provided with the shopping cart. This allows the child to sit on the normal seating surface

of a shopping cart and become accustomed to sitting on a normal seating surface. Additionally, it provides padding between the front and sides of the child and the shopping cart push bar and superstructure. In the nursing cushion mode, the significantly enlarged, adjustable ends of the present invention provide excellent support for the head of a nursing child while also providing a foot stop to give a nursing child a feeling of security.

A unique strap design of a securing waist strap retains the nursing cushion in the proper position while nursing a child, and allows the nursing cushion to automatically fold down out of the way when the nursing mother stands. The strap also employs an adjustment mechanism, and a releasable clamping arrangement to secure and release it from the user's abdomen. Further, the side pads of the cushion can be used to provide additional support to further elevate the nursing cushion in the nursing cushion mode. Additionally, the support surface, being more rectangular, verses the typical crescent shape of prior art cushions, allows support for larger children and twins.

It is an object of the present invention, in the shopping cart mode, to provide a resting cushion that provides support for a person, such as a child, in a seating area of a transportation device such as a shopping cart. In all of the shopping cart mode embodiments described herein, the resting cushion provides sufficient padding to protect the head and upper torso portion of a person/child from the superstructure of the shopping cart in a forward leaning position or in a position slightly off to either side, such as in a sleeping position in which the person's head lies forward over the cart push bar. It is a further object of

the present invention in this mode to provide a padding system that can be placed into the shopping cart after the child is situated within the seating area of the shopping cart. Preferably, the resting cushion is constructed to be
5 at least partially self securing within such a transportation device.

In the nursing mode, it is an object of the present invention to supply a cushion that provides significant head support above the main support area, foot stops to provide a
10 feeling of security to a nursing child, an adjustable securing means that allows the nursing cushion to automatically fold down out of the way when the nursing mother stands, and a large child support surface area generally rectangular in shape in the front of the nursing
15 mother, and additional support structures for providing additional support during nursing or transportation of a child.

The cushion of the present invention, in the shopping cart mode, may have secondary usages, such as on top of a
20 front cross support section of a car seat, similar to the head support cushion of Oliveria. Additionally, in the nursing usage mode, the present invention also provides for child support on the thighs of an adult while the adult is in a reclining position with their legs bent up, and other
25 similar positions.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING

These and other aspects of the invention will be better understood, and additional features of the invention will be described hereinafter having reference to the accompanying
30 drawings in which:

FIGURE 1 is a perspective view of one embodiment of the invention constructed using an air bladder construction technique;

FIGURE 2 is a perspective view of another embodiment of the invention constructed using a sponge rubber construction technique;

FIGURE 3 is a perspective view of another embodiment of the invention constructed using a fabric and stuffing construction technique;

FIGURE 4 is a cross sectional view of the invention constructed with multiple chambers making up the resting surface and side padding structures, taken along the line 4-4 in Figure 3;

FIGURE 5 is a perspective view of the invention displayed in the lap of a nursing mother with an infant nursing across the cushion;

FIGURE 6 is a perspective view of a child seated in a shopping cart, showing the present invention moving into place over the lap of the seated child;

FIGURES 7a and 7b are two cross sectional views of the resting cushion constructed with a single chamber comprising the resting surface, and separate single chambers forming the side padding structures, similar to the multi-chamber embodiment shown in Figure 3, Figure 7a showing the lower side padding chambers both extending downwardly, and Figure 7b showing one lower side chamber folded under the resting cushion and one lower side chamber extending downwardly;

FIGURE 8a is a perspective view of a child being nursed

using a typical prior art nursing cushion;

FIGURE 8b is a perspective view of a child being supported by the resting/feeding cushion according to the present invention, and showing a child lying flat on its back on the resting surface of the cushion, with the adjustable end chambers in the down position;

FIGURE 8c is a perspective view of a child being nursed, with one of the adjustable end chambers rotated inwardly to raise the head of the infant up to the mother's breast, having reference to the configuration of the resting/feeding cushion shown in Figure 7a;

FIGURE 8d is a perspective view of a child being nursed with one of the adjustable end chambers rotated inwardly to raise the head of the infant up to the mother's breast, and the same end padding chamber folded under between the large end chambers/center section and the nursing mother's thigh, having reference to the configuration of the resting/feeding cushion shown in Figure 7b;

FIGURE 9 is a perspective view of a woman standing while holding a child in her arms, with the resting/feeding cushion automatically folding down out of the way; and

FIGURES 10a and 10b are, respectively, top and side views of the hinge arrangement of a preferred embodiment.

It is to be understood that the accompanying drawings and the following descriptions are provided by way of illustration only and are not intended to present a finite embodiment of the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

In Figure 1, one embodiment of the present invention, based on a multi-chamber inflatable fluid bladder cushion 1, is depicted. The multi-chambered fluid bladder cushion 1 is inflated prior to use employing any of a number of known bladder-filling valves and associated apparatuses (not shown). After placement of a child in the seat of a shopping cart 7, the inflated resting cushion 1 is placed in front of the child between the child and the push bar 7a of the shopping cart 7.

A central padding section, in Figure 1 represented by a plurality of side-by-side padding chambers 9, serves as a relatively flat support surface for the torso, arms, and legs of an infant child.

The larger end chambers 2a, 2b are provided to create a higher barrier compared to the central padding chambers 9, thus helping to prevent the child's head or upper body from rolling off the left and right ends of the cushion 1.

Side chambers 4, on both left and right sides of the central padding chambers 9, define a securement structure section of the cushion 1, helping to hold the overall cushion 1 in place within the area of a basic shopping cart 7 to be occupied by a child, and provide padding protection between the child's legs/thighs and the sides 7c of shopping cart 7. In effect, the resiliency of the side chambers 4 permit wedging of the side chambers 4 between a child's legs/thighs and the sides 7c of the shopping cart 7.

In common practice, a child's favorite blanket can be placed over the top of the cushion 1 making an easily

washable comfort surface.

The multiple central padding chambers 9 are formed large enough to provide sufficient padding to prevent a child from hitting the shopping cart push bar 7a when
5 lowering his or her head down to rest on the cushion 1.

Using this design, the invention allows the cushion 1 to be placed into the shopping cart 7 after the child has been placed in the shopping cart 7 and secured. Additionally, supervisory attention need not be split
10 between placement of the cushion 1 and placement of the child in the cart 7, as with prior art.

While providing a significant amount of padding and protection for the child within the shopping cart 7, the child is allowed to sit on the basic seat (not visible in
15 the drawing) of the shopping cart 7 and can lean back against a back support 5 of the cart 7. This allows the child to learn to support and balance himself or herself in a more natural situation, as the shopping cart 7 moves, i.e. the same as without a cushion. This gives the child a more
20 natural base with which to become familiar, contrary to the prior art which isolates the child from the seat of the shopping cart 7.

In some applications for the invention, the optional side chambers 4 can be made to press against the sides 7c of
25 the shopping cart 7, securing the cushion 1 in place and thereby eliminating the need to use additional strapping to support the cushion 1, as is the case with many of the prior art devices.

The larger, and preferably longer, end chambers 2a and

2b are secured to the central padding chambers 9 by means of an attachment arrangement 3. There are many ways that the attachment can be made that are well known to those skilled in the art, and will vary with the construction technique used. In a preferred embodiment, the attachment is made so that the larger end chambers 2a and 2b can be adjusted to be higher than the surface of the central padding chambers 9 at one extreme, or lower at the opposite extreme. For example, a simple technique, such as a fabric hinge attachment arrangement, may be used that would allow adjustment by simple rotation of the end chamber(s) 2a or 2b relative to the central padding chambers 9. In such case, the level of protection in the shopping cart can be adjusted, and the amount of lift provided by the rotated end chamber(s) 2a or 2b during nursing can be adjusted in an alternate feeding mode application of the invention to be described hereinafter.

Figure 2 depicts another embodiment of the invention shown in the shopping cart mode. This embodiment of the resting/feeding cushion 20 is constructed using sponge rubber foam or similar resilient material. It may be optionally covered with a soft fabric or with a child's favorite blanket (not shown). The end pads 22a, 22b are formed to extend higher than the central padding portion 23. While depicted with orthogonal corners and edges, the cushion of Figure 2 can equally be formed with rounded edges and corners. The central padding portion 23 is made thick enough and resilient enough to provide sufficient padding to prevent a child from hitting the shopping cart push bar 7a when lowering his or her head down to rest on the cushion 20. Side pads 24 extend downwardly and help hold the overall cushion 20 in place within the area of a basic shopping cart

7 to be occupied by a child and provide padding protection between the child's legs/thighs and the sides 7c of the shopping cart 7 in the same manner as described in connection with Figure 1. Additionally, the end pads 22a and 5 22b may be attached to the central padding portion 23 using a variety of attachment means 3 including some adjustable hinge means commonly known to those skilled in the art.

As stated above, forming the end pads 22a and 22b with rounded corners, and using a hinge attachment arrangement 3, 10 would also aid in the use of the present invention by allowing adjustment of the level of protection in the shopping cart, or by allowing adjustment of the amount of lift provided in an alternate feeding mode application of the invention to be described hereinafter.

15 A preferred embodiment of the invention is depicted in Figures 3 and 4, the latter being a cross sectional view of the resting/feeding cushion, taken along the line 4-4 in Figure 3. In this embodiment, the cushion 30 is constructed of, at minimum, a base fabric 41 attached to a top fabric 20 43, and stuffed with padding 45 to form padded chambers 31a, 31b, 32, and 33, creating a multi-chamber cushion structure employing processes known in the field of pillow, mattress, and quilt manufacturing. A number of different materials can be used for the base fabric 41, the top fabric 43, and 25 the padding 45 without changing the scope of the invention. For example, the filler for the different cushion segments 4, 2a, 2b, and 9 (Figure 1) may be fluid, cut-foam, shredded foam, feathers, polyfill, synthetic or natural rubber, etc.

The top and bottom fabric pieces 41, 43 may be sewn 30 together, as shown at 47 in Figure 4, such that the connection between top and bottom fabrics 41, 43 is closest

to the bottom of the cushion 30, allowing the bottom piece of fabric 41 to be substantially flat and level in order to conform better to the top surface of the push bar 7a of a shopping cart 7. Additionally, the scallop-shaped top
5 fabric 43 on the side padding section 33 tends to better secure the child resting/feeding cushion 30 against the wire frame sides 7c of the shopping cart 7.

The central padded chambers 32 provide sufficient padding and resiliency so as to cushion a child when leaning
10 forward over the superstructure of a shopping cart 7, preventing injury and providing comfort. The end sections 31a and 31b extend higher than the central padded chambers 32, thus helping to prevent the child's head or upper body from rolling off the end of the cushion 30.

15 Left and right side padding sections 33 serve to protect the child's legs from impacting the shopping cart 7 superstructure and also serve to help secure the overall cushion 30 within the shopping cart 7 without the need for additional strapping.

20 The forward ends of the central and end sections 31a, 31b, and 32 project beyond the forward ends of the side padding sections 33, so as to extend well over the push bar 7a, thereby avoiding contact between the child's face and push bar 7a, preventing the child from being injured or from
25 ingesting germs or other harmful substances residing on the cart push bar 7a.

The larger end chambers 31a and 31b are secured to the central padding chambers 32 by means of an attachment arrangement 3. There are many ways that the attachment can
30 be made that are well known to those skilled in the art, and

will vary with the construction techniques used. In a preferred embodiment, the attachment is made so that the larger end chambers 31a and 31b can be adjusted to be higher than the surface of the central padding chambers 32 at one extreme, or lower at the opposite extreme. For example, a simple technique may be used, such as providing a fabric of a similar type as used in the construction of the rest of the cushion to form a hinge attachment means that would allow the adjustment by simple rotation of the end chamber(s) 31a and/or 31b relative to the central padding chambers 32. In this way, the level of protection in the shopping cart can be adjusted, and the amount of lift provided by the end chamber 31a or 31b during nursing can be adjusted in an alternate feeding mode application of the invention to be described hereinafter.

The embodiment of the invention depicted in Figure 5 is similar to that shown in Figures 3 and 4, as exemplary. In Figure 5, the cushion 30 is being used in the nursing mode, illustrating a comfortable position of a child 52 feeding from a nursing mother 50. In normal use, central sections 32 serve to support the body of a baby 52, while the enlarged end section 31a serves to support the baby's head 51 high enough to comfortably reach the mother's nipple and areola (not shown). The enlarged section 31b, at the opposite end, serves as a foot stop for the nursing baby 52 (not directly shown), or as an arm support for the nursing mother 50. In this mode, 100% of the baby's weight is being supported by the nursing mother's legs and thighs, not her hands, arms or neck. Rotation of the enlarged end section 31a in the direction of arrow 53 increases the height at which the baby's head 51 is being supported, while rotation in the opposite direction allows the baby's head 51 to descend.

While not visible in this drawing, side padding (e.g., side pads 33 in Figure 4) on the side of the baby's head 51 can be folded under between the enlarged end section 31a and the thigh of the mother 50, as depicted in Figures 7b and 8d, thus further increasing the elevation of the baby's head 51, when required.

In the Figure 6 embodiment of the invention, the cushion 60 is depicted in the shopping cart mode as being placed over the lap of a child 62 in a shopping cart 61. The cushion 60 is constructed and configured within the scope of the present invention, having a single large central chamber 63 comprising the middle section of cushion 60. As outlined in the objectives of the invention, the child 62 is placed into the shopping cart 61 prior to the installation of the cushion 60 being placed over the child's lap. As shown in this figure, a restraining strap 64 is secured around the child 62 as designed by the shopping cart manufacturer, thus not altering the safety design of the shopping cart 61. Arrow 65 indicates the direction of placement of the cushion 60 over the lap of the child 62 and into the shopping cart 61.

Another preferred embodiment of the invention comprises a cushion 70 depicted in Figures 7a and 7b in cross sectional views, still within the scope of the present invention, wherein the central padded chambers are reduced in number to one, i.e., central pad 72. The enlarged end chambers 74a and 74b are attached using a hinged attachment 73 as hereinbefore described. For example, a simple sewn seam line is used in this preferred embodiment. In this embodiment, enlarged end chamber 74a is shown as being rotated to an upward and inward position in the direction of

arrow 75. This raises the section 74a of the cushion, providing proper support for the feeding child's head.

Using dash line 77a as a base line on top of the nursing mother's thighs 78 (shown in phantom lining), dash line 77b indicates the relative height of the support surface of the enlarged end chamber 74b. Referencing dash line 77c relative to dash line 77a indicates the additional height of the enlarged end chamber 74a in the rotated upward and inward direction as shown by arrow 75. Enlarged end chamber 74b is shown as being rotated to an outward and down position in the direction of arrow 76. This action, when applied to the end chamber 74a or 74b that supports the child's head, lowers the height of the feeding child's head when required.

Additionally, in Figure 7b, side chamber 71a is shown as being folded under the central pad 72 and the enlarged end chamber 74a/central pad 72 and the leg/ thigh 78 of the nursing/feeding mother, providing a significant amount of additional lift or elevation of the feeding child's head (not shown in this figure). Using dash line 77a as a base line on top of the nursing mother's thighs 78, dash line 77b indicates the relative height of the support surface of the enlarged end chamber 74b. Dash line 77c, relative to dash line 77a, indicates significant additional elevation of the end chamber 74a, beyond that attained by rotation of end chamber 74a upwardly and inwardly in the direction of arrow 75, as previously described.

The spacing between side chambers 71a and 71b is selected to accommodate the torso of a feeding baby comfortably therebetween, the side chambers typically spanning between ten to twenty-four inches. In production,

the resting/feeding cushion may be manufactured in different sizes and may be available with differently spaced side chambers.

Figures 8a through 8d depict four different configurations of a mother nursing a child on a nursing cushion. In Figure 8a, the nursing cushion depicted is a prior art type nursing cushion, similar to "My Brest Friend" by Zenoff. In this figure, the nursing mother 80a is supporting the nursing baby 83 with her hand and arm under the baby, and the nursing cushion 81 is supporting the mother's arm. This figure reveals a common problem with almost all prior art nursing cushions of this type.

First, it is not natural to ask a nursing mother, especially a first time mother to relax the arm with which she is holding her infant child. It is second nature to keep a firm grasp on the child. Additionally, these types of nursing cushions are all made one thickness for all users. Unless the mother, the infant, the chair, and all other relevant factors add up to similar dimensions as planned for by the manufacturer, the amount of support or lift will be incorrect, usually providing too low of support for the baby's body and/or too little lift of the baby's head. The result is that the nursing mother's arm becomes fatigued. This tends to let the infant drift away from the breast, making harder for the infant to take in a large portion of the areola. This tends to pull the baby's lips away from the areola, resulting in the infant nursing directly on the nipple. This can become extremely painful for the nursing mother. As a result, the mother tends to lean forward to bring the breast closer to the child. This tends to solve the breast positioning problem, but, in turn, causes

discomfort for the mother and result in a sore back or neck. There is virtually no adjustment in this type of cushion.

Figure 8b depicts a mother supporting her infant 83 using a cushion 82 made in accordance with the present invention in the down or flat mode. In this mode, the infant 83 can simply be supported on the lap of the non-nursing mother 80b, with 100% of the baby's weight on her thighs. As previously stated, there is no load on the hands, arms, shoulders, or back of the mother 80b. In this mode, the mother 80b simply interacts with the infant 83 or lets him/her rest.

Figure 8C depicts the cushion 82 of the present invention in the nursing mode, supporting an infant 83 in a nursing position up to the breast of a nursing mother 80a. In this instance, one of the large end chambers 85 is rotated upwardly and inwardly raising the nursing infant's head up to the mother's breast, and the side pad 84 is not folded under the large end chamber 85 (cf. Figure 7a @ 74a). Again, 100% of the weight of the infant 83 is on the mother's 80a thighs, not her arm, hand, neck or back.

Figure 8d depicts the same nursing mother 80a and infant 83 of Figure 8c with the side pad 84 tucked under the large end chamber 85 to provide additional lift (cf. Figure 7b @ 71a). The side pads 84 serve the dual purposes of providing a securement means and padding in the shopping cart mode, and an additional elevation propping means in the nursing mode. As shown and described herein, the side pads 84 are permanently affixed so they never become lost or fall off.

It can be appreciated, having reference to Figure 8d,

that when a nursing mother 80a has her right knee (under end tube 86) moved closer to her left knee (under end tube 85) under the baby's head 83, the end of the resting/feeding cushion near to the end chamber 86 under the baby's 83 feet, 5 may extend over the outer side of one of the mother's right thigh, allowing the cushion 82 to further tilt downward to the right, away from a level horizontal position. In this position, the novel design nursing cushion will effectively tilt, allowing the baby's feet to drop lower than the head. 10 This allows gravity to help the swallowing process helping to minimize reflux and nasal regurgitation. This tiling position also tends to move the baby's face closer to the breast making latching easier.

In Figure 9, the mother 92 is depicted in a standing 15 position holding a resting or sleeping infant 91. The cushion 82 of the present invention is shown in the down position, being held onto the mother 92 by a securing arrangement 93. The securing arrangement 93 may be implemented by using a variety of materials commonly known 20 to those skilled in the art. In the preferred embodiment, the securing arrangement 93 is made in such a manner as to be quiet when closing or releasing. Further, it holds the nursing cushion 82 comfortably in place around the abdomen of the mother 92, while she is nursing the infant, allows 25 the cushion to fold down out of the way with only the assistance of gravity when the mother stands, secures the nursing cushion 82 in the down position while mother 92 is standing or moving, is adjustable to fit various size mothers, and permits the cushion 82 to return to its correct 30 position for nursing when the mother 92 returns to a seated position.

The retaining strap 93, shown as exemplary, is attached to the nursing cushion 82, preferably along the peripheral rear edge, near the edge seam, forming a folding or hinge line generally indicated by numeral 95. The securing
5 arrangement 93 further has a release mechanism 94 that allows it to be released and secured to the nursing mother 92, preferably easily and quietly, so as not to disturb an infant 91 asleep on the nursing cushion 82. Not to be limiting in scope, in the preferred embodiment, the securing
10 arrangement is a strap made of Nylon webbing, with an adjustable plastic snap buckle, sewn into the periphery of the rear edge of the nursing cushion 82 @ 95.

In Figures 10a and 10b, a schematic representation of a resting/feeding cushion 100, according to the present
15 invention, is depicted in both a top view (Figure 10a) and a side view (Figure 10b). In these figures, the cushion 100 is shown comprising a central pad only. Enlarged end chambers 74a, 74b, and side padding chambers 71a, 71b (see Figures 7a and 7b) have been omitted for ease of explanation. It is
20 intended that all chambers of the resting/feeding cushion are attached to each other, and move together.

In the top view of Figure 10a, the cross sectional view of the body of the nursing mother is indicated by dash line 106. A securing strap 105 is represented as being wrapped
25 around the body of the nursing mother 106. The portion of the strap 105 inside the hinge section of the present invention is depicted by a dash line 104.

In both the top view (Figure 10a) and the side view (Figure 10b), the cushion 100 is shown in position 101a as
30 sticking out perpendicular to the body of the nursing mother (indicated in Figure 10b by dash lines 102 and 103), the

same position as would be used when nursing a child in a seated position. Dashed line 101b represents the downward position of cushion 100, as when the nursing mother stands. The hinge mechanism 104, in the preferred embodiment, is
5 formed by sewing the strap 105 into the narrowed edge portion of the central chamber of cushion 100.

Although the descriptions and figures herein are directed to specific embodiments, these should not be construed as limiting the scope of the invention, but as
10 merely providing illustrations and examples of preferred embodiments of the resting/feeding cushion according to the present invention.

There are many other features envisioned by the inventor. These include the use of the cushion in other
15 structures such as strollers, car seats, etc. Additionally, a cushion made in accordance with the invention can also be used as a lap cushion for a resting child, or for playing with a child. Additionally, there are a variety of materials and chamber combinations that may be used in the manufacture
20 of the cushion. Some of these may include the basic structure as being filled with air, other gases, or other materials, while maintaining the shape and functionality. The entire cushion could be manufactured as a single chamber with the same basic shape, etc. Such basic modifications are
25 well known to anyone skilled in the art and do not detract from the concept of providing a product that: a. cushions a child in a shopping cart, or similar transportation device, and which can be put in place after placement of the child within the shopping cart, or similar transportation device;
30 or b. can serve as a nursing or feeding cushion that props the child's head above the elevation of the rest of the body

at selectable heights.

While only certain embodiments of the invention have been set forth above, alternative embodiments and various modifications will be apparent from the above description
5 and the accompanying drawing to those skilled in the art. These and other alternatives are considered equivalents and within the spirit and scope of the present invention. Thus the scope of the invention should be determined by the appended claims and the legal equivalents, rather than by
10 the examples given.